XVI.—*Remarks on the Thrushes of the Æthiopian Region.* By Henry Seebohm, F.Z.S.

The Thrushes of the Æthiopian Region all belong to the genera *Geocichla* and *Turdus*. Of the former genus seven species are known; and of the latter twelve have been described from Africa. Of the former genus we have two types, one with the breast and flanks spotted, and the other without spots on the underparts. *Geocichla guttata* is probably the least changed Ground-Thrush in Africa. It inhabits the forests of Natal. Its nearest relations appear to be *G. litsitsirupa*, distributed throughout South Africa, and a northern form of this species inhabiting the highlands of Abyssinia, *G. simensis*, which differs from its southern ally only in being more rufous, a difference probably caused by living in a damper climate. The two last-mentioned species are somewhat more advanced than *G. guttata*, but are still more nearly allied to *Geocichla* than to *Turdus*. These three species appear to be the least changed descendants of the ancestors of the palæarctic Thrushes. Of the other type of Æthiopian Ground-Thrushes, with no spots on the underparts, four very nearly allied species are known—*G. princei* from the Gold Coast, *G. crossleyi* from the Cameroons, *G. piaggii* from the Uganda country, near the supposed sources of the Nile, and *G. gurneyi* from the Transvaal and Natal. These species are probably the least changed descendants of the ancestors of the Æthiopian species of the genus *Turdus*, to which Cabanis has applied the subgeneric name of *Peliocichla* (J. f. O. 1882, p. 318).

The *Peliocichlæ* are so closely allied to the South-American *Planestici* that it requires a careful examination to discriminate some of them; and the name of this group must be regarded as a purely geographical expression, and not in any way denoting the least difference of even subgeneric value. The *Peliocichlæ* are divided by Cabanis into twelve species; but the characters upon which many of these are founded are so slight that modern ornithologists would call them only local races or climatic forms, and some of them have already been described as such. There is very little variation in size, and scarcely any in wing-formula. The colour of the upper parts varies, according to climate, from slate-grey through a neutral brown to olive-brown. In all of them the sides of the upper throat are streaked with brown or black. In all of them the axillaries and under wing-coverts are of an orange chestnut and the under tail-coverts white, with more or less brown margins on the basal half. They have all pale legs and feet and yellow bills.

Four fairly good species and half a dozen climatic forms or local races of this group are at present known. The four species may be distinguished as under:—

Upper parts varying from brown to dull slate-grey; centre of belly white.
  Streaks on the throat nearly black .... *T. libonyanus.*
  Streaks on the throat pale brown .... *T. pelios.*
Upper parts bright slate-grey; very little white on belly; breast dull slate-grey; inner margins of quills orange-chestnut; a bare space behind the eye .... *T. tephronotus.*
Upper parts brown; belly orange-chestnut with no white except on the feathers round the vent.
  Flanks orange-chestnut .... *T. olivacinus.*

T. libonyanus inhabits South Africa, having been obtained in Damara Land, the Bechuana country, and the Transvaal. Two supposed new tropical races of this species, an eastern and a western one, have been described by Cabanis. They are both slightly smaller than the typical form. The eastern race (var. *tropicalis*) is found in Mozambique, and is paler and more buffy on the breast than the typical form, and is browner and less grey on the upper parts. The western race (var. *schuetti*, Cab. J. f. O. 1882, p. 319) is of the same colour on the breast as the eastern race, but is slightly paler on the flanks, and is somewhat greyer in the colour of the upper parts than the typical form. The difference in size is very trifling between these two northern races. The western race was described by Cabanis from Angola; but in the British Museum there is an example from Damara Land and another from the Zambesi. The latter skin seems to dispose of the supposition that they are local races. I take *T.*

schuetti to be the summer plumage, more or less abraded, and consequently greyer on the back and less brilliant on the flanks—in fact, faded—and *T. tropicalis* to be the newly moulted autumn form.

T. pelios is not found in South Africa, but in its restricted sense may be said to be confined to the lowlands of Abyssinia, the Bogos country, and the district from Abeokuta to the Gold Coast. A western local race (var. *cryptopyrrha*) is found in Senegambia, and differs from the typical form in having the buffish chestnut of the underparts absent altogether, that usually on the flanks being replaced by pale greyish brown. It is also slightly larger. On the east coast of the Gulf of Guinea, near the equator, a tropical form (var. *saturata*) occurs, having the upper parts and the breast darker and browner, the dark margins to the under tail-coverts somewhat more pronounced, and the size slightly less. Further south on the same coast, in Angola, a southern form has been described by Cabanis (var. *bocagei*), which is said to be slightly larger than the typical form and to be more olive on the upper parts, with the stripes on the throat less distinct; but of this there is only one example in the Berlin Museum. Newly moulted examples from the Gaboon exactly answer Cabanis's description; and I have two examples in my collection from the Congo. I have little doubt that it is only the newly moulted autumn plumage of *T. saturatus*.

T. tephronotus is found in Zanzibar, and appears to be a good species.

T. olivacinus inhabits the highlands of Abyssinia and the Uganda country. It has a very near ally in South Africa (var. *olivacea*), differing only in having the upper parts a shade paler and the ground-colour of the throat whiter.

T. cabanisi is very nearly allied to the preceding. It is found in the Transvaal and Kaffirland. It is, perhaps, a shade browner on the upper parts, and has the flanks also brown, the bill also is slightly longer; but some examples are quite intermediate and difficult to determine.